

More Than 500 Research Plots At Ohio Horticulture Field Night

HILLSBORO, Ohio — Have you ever seen an heirloom tomato or a virus-resistant pumpkin? These are the latest in specialty crops making their niche in Ohio agriculture, and they will be on display at Horticulture Field Night, Monday, Aug. 17, 6 p.m. to dark.

Horticulture Field Night will be held at the main campus of the Southern State Community College, 200 Hobart Drive, Rt. 62 north of Hillsboro. More than 500 fruit and vegetable research and demonstration plots and 15 different research projects will be on display.

Brad Bergefurd, horticultural agent for Ohio State University Extension at the Enterprise Center for Economic Development, said current growers or those considering growing and marketing specialty vegetable crops should attend the event. "If you're a farmer looking for ways to diversify your current farming operation, Horticulture Field Night will be beneficial."

Bergefurd said the highlight of Field Night is usually the wagon tour. Visitors are carried through field where more than 500 fruit and vegetable research and demonstration plots can be viewed. Several state and regional Ohio State specialists will be on hand to update growers on current problems, new techniques and research projects that will impact their operations. Growers may ask questions or advice for problems they are currently experiencing on their own operations.

Visitors will also receive information and watch a video of the new, one-of-a-kind, mechanical pepper harvester for processing peppers. The equipment was designed and is currently used in Texas pepper fields. The machine's manufacturer will be available for a question/answer session via a group conference call. Bergefurd is in the process of arranging a growers' tour to view the machine in operation at its Texas location.

Another feature of Horticulture Field Night is the TOM-CAST disease forecasting system. It's used to track weather conditions that may cause fungal disease development in Ohio's tomato crop. The Hillsboro site was one of the first places in Ohio to test this system on fresh market tomatoes about four years ago. The system allows for reduced fungicide use, residues and can lower production costs for tomato growers. How? By following weather conditions, farmers know exactly when to apply necessary fungicides, reducing excess usage.

"The CR-10 is a computerized system which monitors leaf wetness and temperature within the field," Bergefurd said. "These readings are then calculated to come up with a Disease Severity Value (DSV) threshold. Growers use this information to determine when to apply fungicide applications to their tomato crop."

The CR-10 is being compared to a system called Skybit. It uses satellite technology to gather the same information as the CR-10 units. "We're currently comparing these systems, because if they are similar in their results, a grower could subscribe to the Skybit system on a season basis," Bergefurd said. Growers who wish to purchase CR-10

units may spend several thousand dollars, according to Bergefurd.

Visitors at the event will see bacterial spot-resistant pepper evaluations, ornamental corn germplasm plots, oriental crops production and marketing ideas, red and green cabbage evaluations, watermelon and eastern

muskmelon cultivar trials, and pumpkin disease prevention techniques. There will also be Internet and Web page demonstrations.

Bergefurd said a new line of specialty crop equipment will be on display as well. Visitors will see a newly constructed sprayer used for staked tomatoes, a plas-

tic mulch layer and lifter, raised bed shaper, mechanical transplanter and punch planter for planting crops through plastic mulch. A water wheel setter for setting plants into plastic mulch will be visible, in addition to a Porterway mechanical vegetable harvester, potato harvester and the newly constructed greenhouse.

Horticulture Field Night is free and open to the public. Supper will be served. The event is sponsored by the OSU Extension Enterprise Center and Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.

For more information, contact Brad Bergefurd, (800) 860-7232.

Producers Strive To Identify Predictable Genetics

SUNRISE BEACH, Mo. — Regardless of the breed of cattle, all producers strive to produce the best beef product possible.

A group of Angus producers from throughout the United States have joined together forming the Angus Sire Alliance, which uses every tool available, including ultrasound data, to help identify the most profitable and predictable genes in the Angus breed.

Angus Sire Alliance members submit one bull to participate. The sire is then bred to 100 com-

mercial Angus cows through artificial insemination and natural exposure. Data is then collected on the steer progeny when they reach 14-15 months of age. This data will be used in determining the top sire.

The first set of Sire Alliance steers, which consisted of 700 steers sired by 20 bulls, went to the feedlot on Jan. 20 with projected slaughter dates in late April or early May.

"Four to six weeks before the projected slaughter dates, ultra-

sound measurements are recorded to determine rib-eye scores, degree of marbling and fat thickness to identify which contemporary groups will be ready to slaughter. This procedure is a measuring stick to see where the calves are. These measurements will be compared to the data collected on the slaughter dates," said Michael Montoya of Broken Lance Ranch in Bucyrus, Kan., a member of the Alliance.

The Angus Sire Alliance will have a positive impact on the

beef cattle industry, according to Montoya.

"The Angus Sire Alliance will improve the quality of beef and increase the degree of marbling in animals. It also will help producers identify the most efficient and more profitable genetics for commercial producers throughout the country," said Montoya.

The Angus Sire Alliance is an ongoing research program, covering every segment of the beef cattle industry from conception to the consumer.

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